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Dear Hiring Committee,

It is with tremendous enthusiasm that I write this letter of recommendation for Matt Barton. I have known Matt professionally for approximately 12 years. During those years I knew Matt as a fellow teacher in the Manitou Springs School District and then later had the distinct pleasure of working with Matt in his highly respected role as Girls Soccer Coach when I was the Athletic Director at Manitou Springs High School.

My first introduction to Matt was in his early years at Manitou Springs High School. He was the head coach of the girls soccer program at MSHS. Many of the students I had taught in their elementary days were now playing soccer at the high school level. They had perked my interest because of the stories they would relay to me about their new coach, referred to simply as "Barton." During those early days I began to understand why these young ladies spoke so fondly of him. Under his guidance, the MSHS soccer program experienced more success than any athletic program at MSHS, but there was something unique about the interaction between player and coach. Countless times I would see players come off the field feeling poorly about the way they had performed, upset about a referee's call, or upset about an opponents hard tackle, etc. only to see Barton talk to them individually, illicit a smile from them, and get them focused on the task at hand. Whether the game was a state playoff game or a pre-season scrimmage, his main emphasis was to help each of his players be the best person possible. The final score was indeed secondary!

My next experience with Matt was listening to him address a group of soccer parents at the beginning of the soccer season. Our daughter was a freshman soccer player at the time. I will always remember what an excellent public speaker he was. Not only did he deliver his presentation with power and grace, but the message was especially refreshing. He stressed how important family is and that family comes first. He had a special way of presenting the information that led you to believe that this was indeed how he felt. These were more than words; this was a personal philosophy. He represents himself as a compassionate, articulate, and intelligent person. He will do the same for your school!

Throughout my 10 years of knowing Matt, I have known him as a fellow teacher, as my daughter's soccer coach, and as his supervisor while I was the Athletic Director at Manitou Springs High School. As his supervisor, I can unequivocally state I have never worked with a person who was so driven to achieve one goal-doing what is best for kids. That philosophy is the basis for everything he does. He has so many strengths; organization, dedication, communication, intelligence, humor, etc., but all contribute to one result-doing what is the best for kids. He is driven to make his students and athletes achieve success in any arena. He has the very special ability to make a student and/or athlete feel positive. This is such a fragile age, Matt was the only staff member that understood this to the extent that it drove him in each and every one of his interactions with students, players, parents and co-workers. This statement is not meant to be a negative comment regarding other members of that staff, but to show the one in a million candidate Matt is for your position. He separates himself from the status quo by leaps and bounds and it is obvious in everything he does.

To further emphasize the level of excellence Matt is able to attain is the way he managed his soccer program. He understood the importance of developing a youth soccer program in the Manitou community. He developed an extensive summer soccer camp which not only helped develop the soccer program, but also provided a great athletic opportunity for young boys and girls of the community. The revenue generated from these camps allowed him to fund his program above what was budgeted by the school district.

Matt was also one of the first soccer coaches in Colorado to make head gear mandatory for his players. Telling teenage girls they must wear head gear is not an easy sell. Matt was able to make it a very smooth transition because all players/parents knew Matt only wants what is best for them. Preventing a concussion was the only issue. Matt conveyed that in a way that no one could argue with. End result, fewer players had injuries that could hinder them the rest of their lives!

After 23 years in public education, I know how rare it is to find a person with this kind of talent and drive. You are very fortunate to have the opportunity to offer him a position within your school community. Take advantage of your good fortune!

I welcome the opportunity to speak with you further about Matt. Feel free to contact me by phone or email.

Respectfully,

Russ Stamp